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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 7, 2006, at 2 p.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2006

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

O God who has comprehended our lives and is the author and finisher of our faith, teach us to live our days with the heights above us and on level plains. We thank You for Your grace that strengthens us for the tasks of each day and for the unfolding of Your wonderful Providence. Keep us from becoming intoxicated by the desire for success and protect us from the fear of failure that paralyzes noble striving. Lead us through the abysses of pride and across the gorges of pretension to the richness of Your transforming spirit of love.

Guide the Members of our Nation's legislative branch today with Your wisdom. Show them solutions to the problems that beset our land. Empower them with a compassion that seeks first Your glory and deliver them from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind.

Help us all to praise You with our words and deeds.

We pray in the name of the captain of our salvation.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. STEVENS).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, February 2, 2006.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable LISA MURKOWSKI, a Senator from the State of Alaska, to perform the duties of the Chair.

TED STEVENS,
President pro tempore.

Ms. MURKOWSKI thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, this morning we will resume debate on

the House-passed tax reconciliation bill. I would like to observe that yesterday and today, up until the time we pass the tax reconciliation bill, we are actually engaging in an utterly futile activity that should have been avoided by the simple act of granting consent. In effect, the minority, in apparently a display of pique, wants to make the Senate, in effect, do again a bill it already did in December.

I am not opposed to dilatory tactics when they are not pointless. I have been in the minority in this body and have been a proud guardian of gridlock from time to time when there was a point to it, when we were actually trying to defeat a measure. But it seems to me to some extent it demeans the institution and grates on the nerves of everyone when common courtesy of granting consent is not offered.

Nevertheless, yesterday and today, we will plod through a bill that we did about 5 weeks ago one more time; at the end, with the same result.

Let me report that at this point there are 7 hours remaining for that debate, although we do not believe all of that time will be necessary. At some point early this afternoon, we expect on this side to yield back time, and we would begin voting. The so-called vote-arama will be a series of consecutive votes on amendments to the bill which will eventually lead to passage. We hope it is not a lengthy voting series because that will simply inconvenience all Members on both sides of the aisle. However, that is up to the Members of

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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this body as to how many amendments they choose to offer.

In any event, the majority leader has stated that we will stay on the bill until we complete it this week. I encourage Senators to stay close to the Chamber once the voting sequence begins because, as we all recall, there is not much time between those votes.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The minority leader is recognized.

DEFICIT REDUCTION

Mr. REID. Madam President, through the Chair to the distinguished Senator from Kentucky, and to anyone within the sound of my voice, if there were ever a grating of nerves, it is the nerves of the American people by what this piece of legislation does to them. This legislation was named by the majority in conjunction with the President. It is called the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005. If there were ever Orwellian doublespeak, it is that.

Using the numbers the majority placed in this bill, the budget Deficit Reduction Act of 2005—we are in 2006, but it was named and completed in 2005—it increases the deficit by \$50 billion. The Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 increases the deficit by \$50 billion using their numbers. So let's not talk about grating the nerves. If there were ever a grating of nerves, it should be the American people who are so concerned about what has happened to the economy of this country.

In just a few days we are going to be asked to increase the debt ceiling from \$8.2 trillion to whatever figure they pick, \$9 trillion; "they" meaning the majority. Talk about grating the nerves. We, the minority, need not be lectured on common courtesies as expressed by the distinguished Senator from Kentucky. There is no one in the Senate who is more bipartisan than the distinguished senior Senator from Montana who is the floor manager of this legislation. We are doing nothing but following procedure.

Frankly, what happened yesterday didn't extend common courtesy. We were not allowed to offer a single amendment. If this is how we want to start the year, by pointing fingers, we can point fingers just as well as the majority. We chose not to do that yesterday. There wasn't a speech given yesterday about how we had been prevented from offering amendments, but the Senator from Kentucky comes out here this morning and lectures us on common courtesy and grating nerves. Any time that debate needs to take place, we will be involved.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority whip.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I certainly don't intend to engage in a

prolonged debate this morning. Let me repeat that we passed this bill about 5 weeks ago. A number of Democrats voted for it on final passage. The reason they voted for it is they know it is the only way to prevent a tax increase on many middle-class people who are counting on the tax relief that was passed several years back and hope that it will continue. My only point is, I say to my good friend from Nevada—and he is my good friend—we have been there and done that on this bill. To simply redo the same measure is arguably a waste of the Senate's time. Nevertheless, that is where we are. At some point this week we will complete, once again, the passage of this Tax Increase Prevention Act which will be to the substantial benefit of the American people.

I yield the floor.

TAX RELIEF EXTENSION RECONCILIATION ACT OF 2005

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4297, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4297) to provide for reconciliation pursuant to section 201(b) of the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2006.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Montana.

Mr. BAUCUS. Madam President, we have a few hours left on this side. I believe the Senator from California, Mrs. BOXER, is on her way to the Chamber and will be here momentarily. Until that moment arrives, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BYRD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I may yield to the distinguished Senator from Michigan such time as she may require and that I may be recognized at the close of her remarks.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Michigan.

Ms. STABENOW. Madam President, I thank the distinguished Senator from West Virginia for his kindness this morning.

I rise in support of Senator BAUCUS's amendment. At a time when middle-class families are struggling to pay their bills, the House tax bill would actually increase taxes by more than \$30 billion on those families—\$30 billion.

This is a very difficult time for Michigan families. Every day we hear news about another plant closing or a company entering into bankruptcy.

Michigan has lost 111,000 manufacturing jobs, and that doesn't include the recent announcement by Ford to cut another 30,000 jobs.

Michigan families are worried about their jobs. They are also worried about losing the pension that they have worked hard for and paid into for the 30 years that they have worked. They see their health care premiums continue to skyrocket, and they are struggling to fill gas tanks and pay home heating bills. The average price of gasoline in Michigan last month was \$2.35 a gallon. Now middle-class families are facing home heating bills that are as much as 35 percent more expensive than last year. And their salaries and their pay stubs don't show a 35-percent increase. If anything, they are going down in terms of income.

What does the House bill propose to do to help middle-class families? Raise their taxes. This was quite stunning to me when I reviewed the bill that came over from the House of Representatives. We are talking about a bill that actually raises taxes on middle-income families. That is not acceptable. We can do better than that. Our middle-class way of life is in danger. I believe very strongly that in Michigan and places all across this country we are fighting for a way of life. Will we have the standard of living that we have had? Will we have the ability to send our kids to college and be able to buy a home and be able to dream the American dream and be successful? At every turn, we are seeing action taken here that takes our way of life and our opportunities away. Before Christmas, it was a bill that is part of this whole package, cutting over \$12 billion in opportunities for people to go to college, by cutting student loans.

So this is another one of those cases where people are working hard, expecting us to do the right thing and, in fact, the House bill would raise taxes on middle-income people, while lowering taxes for those who are already very blessed, earning millions of dollars a year. We need to be passing legislation that lowers health care costs, which is hurting American manufacturers. We need legislation that will protect people's pensions. This ought to be a basic premise and principle that we abide by in this country. When you work hard all your life and you pay into a pension, you should know that that will be there for you and your family.

We must also enforce our trade laws and insist that countries such as China and Japan play by the rules and stop manipulating their currency and that we don't see counterfeit products coming into this country illegally, or other countries stealing our ideas and patents.

That is the debate we should be having. These are actions we should be taking. I was deeply concerned the other night to hear the President talk about those of us who want to enforce trade laws, essentially saying we are